

MESOPOTAMIAN MINUTE

- Current News on Agriculture & USDA in Iraq -

Office of Agricultural Affairs, U.S. Embassy, Baghdad

Sunday, March 27, 2011



Crop Status In Muthana – USDA Baghdad’s Ron Verdonk and Pat Broyles traveled via COB Adder (Tallil) to pick up PRT Ag Advisor Wayne Marcus along with Iraq Provincial officials to view the crop status in Muthana via helicopter. This flight had been arranged by Wayne Marcus several weeks in advance. The primary and secondary canal systems were operating but there was little water in any of the smaller canals. The wheat crop was green and growing but indications are not for a bumper crop due to: 1. Lack of adequate and timely irrigation; 2. Lack of adequate fertilization; and 3. Salinity problems in the soil.



Dairy Nutrition Seminar, Amman March 5-7 – 27 Iraqi dairy farmers, university professors and MoA employees gathered in Amman Jordan to participate in a dairy nutrition seminar sponsored by the American Soybean Association. The seriousness of the participants was demonstrated by their willingness to fund their own transportation from Iraq. The first two days featured Dr. Charles Stallings from Virginia Technical Institute, as he informed the participants of the latest in dairy feeding technology. The last day was hosted by USDA Baghdad’s Dr. Al-Shabibi, who led a tour of two active Jordanian dairy farms and a feed mill.



Sewing Machines for Aziziyah Area Farm Women – PRT Wasit Ag Advisor George Stickels and PRT local staffers “Ali” and “Firas” visited a sewing machine training class in Dabooni, Al-Aziziyah District, in Wasit Province. Wasit Province is a leading agricultural area where many women live in its rural villages. Sixteen women expressed a desire to develop advanced sewing skills to prepare them to either make saleable clothing at home, or to work in area sewing/tailoring shops. The women who participated in this project could lead the economic stabilization of the Al-Aziziyah region and demonstrate that ambitious women can become independent and self-sufficient.

US Wheat Is On The Menu – In the first quarter of 2011 the Ministry of Trade’s Grain Board has awarded 600,000 metric tons of wheat supply business to US companies for milling, and the flour produced will be destined for the Public Distribution System. This purchasing represents about 20% of what Iraq is likely to import for all of 2011. Typically, 60 - 70% of Iraq’s demand for milling wheat is met by imports. The 2011 wheat crop to be harvested in May and June is likely to be 10 to 15% smaller than the strong output of about 2.5 million metric tons registered in 2010.

Personnel Update - There are currently 30 USDA personnel in Iraq including those with Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), at Embassy Baghdad or embedded with U.S. military units.

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